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ABSTRACT

For some years, groups like the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) have been urging librarians to take a second look at children's books previously regarded as classics and to evaluate them in the light of the new consciousness which acknowledges the oppression of Third World peoples and women. On January 29, 1973, the Board of Directors of the American Library Association (ALA) Children's Services Division unanimously passed a resolution calling for the re-evaluation of library materials for childrens collections. However others--particularly ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC)--actively challenged the resolution. On February 2, 1973, the ALA Council adopted an IFC counter-resolution, setting forth the concept that sexism, racism, and other isms are ideas which should not be censored. Furthermore, the Library Bill of Rights was cited as prohibiting children's librarians from assuming functions different from those assigned to adult librarians. The CIBC then published a position paper entitled Censorship and Racism: A Dilemma for Librarians. On January 21, 1976, the IFC adopted a statement in the form of a reply to that position paper, giving reasons for their opposition. Comments on the IFC's most recent statement are given here. (Author/JM)

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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BULLETIN

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 4, 1976

ED127401

A CENTENNIAL CHALLENGE FOR ALA—

Human or Anti-Human Values in Children's Books?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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- ACTION PROGRAMS FOR LIBRARIANS
- THE "CENSORSHIP" CONTROVERSY
- RACISM AND SEXISM AWARENESS RESOURCES

INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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VOLUME 7, NUMBER 4 1976

SPECIAL ISSUE: "CENSORSHIP," SELECTION AND CHILDREN'S COLLECTIONS

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"Censorship" or Selection: The Search for Common Ground

For some years, groups like the Council on Interracial Books for Children have been urging librarians to take a second look at children's books previously regarded as classics and to reevaluate them in the light of the new consciousness which acknowledges the oppression of Third World peoples and women.

We were therefore delighted when, on January 29, 1973, the Board of Directors of the ALA Children's Services Division (CSD) unanimously passed a resolution calling for the reevaluation of library materials for children's collections. The resolution urged children's librarians to examine their collections critically and determine whether "in light of growing knowledge and broadening perspectives" books should be retained or replaced by more up-to-date publications. The full text of this resolution is reprinted on page 8.

However, while we were welcoming the CSD resolution as a potential step forward in the struggle to counteract destructive racist and sexist attitudes and practices in U.S. society, others (particularly ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee) were actively challenging the resolution. On February 2, 1973, the ALA Council adopted an IFC counter-resolution, setting forth the concept that "sexism, racism and other isms" are "ideas" which should not be "censored." Furthermore, the Library Bill of Rights was cited as prohibiting children's librarians from assuming functions different from those assigned to adult librarians.

In an effort to support the faltering reevaluation movement within the ALA, the CIBC published a position paper entitled "Censorship and Racism: A Dilemma for Librarians." (The position paper, which came out at the time of the summer 1975 ALA convention in San Francisco, is reproduced on page 8.) But, in December of 1975, the IFC succeeded in having the CSD resolution rescinded for its support of "censorship" and in the name of "intellectual freedom." We regard this defeat of a forward step in children's library services as an ominous sign of the times. At a time when the advances of the civil rights movement are under attack and steadily being eroded, the IFC's position can only serve to stifle free and open discussion of the issues—and, what is most important, to inhibit action when it is most needed!

An Open Letter to the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association

We are on your side when you defend the rights of children to have free access to ideas. We believe, as you do, that children have the intelligence to consider differences of opinion on issues.

However, we do not recognize the "right" of a child to be indoctrinated with bigotry or to be psychologically abused by materials which demean the child's race, sex or ethnic background.

We welcome the opportunity to debate with anyone about **how** racist and sexist materials can be effectively countered in library systems. But as to **whether** racism and sexism are evils or **whether**, as evils, they should be countered in some way whenever manifest, we maintain there is no basis for debate.

On January 21, 1976, the IFC adopted a statement in the form of a reply to our position paper, giving reasons for their opposition (the response appears on page 8).

Readers acquainted with the controversy will note that the IFC's response fails to address the substance of our position: That the universal practice of covert censorship by librarians should be openly acknowledged. Skirting the basic problem entirely, the IFC simply reiterates its position regarding *overt* censorship without submitting any counter-arguments whatsoever to either the CIBC's definition and description of covert censorship, our analysis of IFC assumptions or our differentiation between racism/sexism and "unpopular viewpoints." Nor does their statement address the reality that criteria *are always used* both to evaluate existing library collections and to select new materials.

Given the IFC's studied evasion of the issues, we feel it is necessary, for the purpose of continued debate, to further pinpoint the nature of our differences. The IFC is an important body with the legitimate function of protecting anti-establishment viewpoints. However, the positions the IFC has taken serve, on the one hand, as a cover for librarians to evade any social responsibilities and, on the other, to inhibit positive social action. Because the IFC holds such an authoritative position within ALA, they must do more than merely affirm their own opposition to racism and sexism. They must propose ways for children's librarians to act against racism and sexism to overcome these social evils.

Our comments on the IFC's most recent statement appear on the following page.

This article begins on the preceding page

THE DIALOG WITH IFC CONTINUED

IFC SAYS:
"The refusal of the ALA to endorse the censorship of racist and sexist books no more makes it pro-racist and pro-sexist than its refusal to censor the works of Karl Marx makes it pro-communist."

CIBC REPLIES:
This bit of razzle-dazzle mixes apples with oranges. It equates phenomena which are fundamentally different in their properties and, therefore, unequal in their value. One can choose whether or not to be in sympathy with books that express particular ideologies. If a book extols or derides communism, for example, readers can choose to change their persuasion on that topic. If a book extols or derides theism (or pornography, or narcotics use, etc.) readers can agree or disagree with the author. By contrast, books which insult or demean one group's color or sex while exalting another group's color or sex are attacking unalterable physical realities. One *cannot* choose whether to be affected by such books because one cannot choose one's color or sex. These are attributes one is born with.

To circulate to young children books which abuse their racial or sexual identities, thus undermining their self-images—and further to defend such books in the name of "intellectual freedom"—is cruel in the extreme.

IFC SAYS:
"In view of the purpose of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, we cannot under any circumstances, join in a campaign to balance library collections through censorship."

CIBC REPLIES:
Again, the IFC is dissembling. No one has called for "balance through censorship." (Even though there is now gross imbalance through covert censorship.) To really achieve balance would require eliminating all but a handful of books in any library collection. The resulting bonfire might help the energy crisis but would not help the children we are all concerned about. What are we calling for? Only for recognition of certain realities—that a selection process *exists* and has always existed, it has and does involve some degree of covert censorship. We call for participation in that selection process by Third World and feminist representatives and the introduction of criteria referring to racism and sexism. We also ask for relocation of a few blatantly offensive young children's books on reference shelves to be used by adults to constructively teach about racism/sexism and their manifestations. Balance? We hold no such impossible dreams. It is not a question of balance but rather concern for broader library collections based on more careful consideration of possible racist/sexist content.

IFC SAYS:
"Above all, we want to emphasize that we do not support any criteria for evaluating library collections. . . ."

CIBC REPLIES:
If criteria per se are onerous, then many courses at schools of library science should be abolished as extraneous. What is selection if not the application of criteria? All educators, including librarians, are trained to develop and apply criteria. No, it is not criteria the IFC is against; it is certain criteria. The question really is, are selection criteria to be limited solely to those relating to literary style, excluding value content?

IFC SAYS:
"Librarians are ultimately responsible to their patrons."

CIBC REPLIES:
Amen! And when patrons are young children of whatever race or sex, a librarian's responsibility is to guide their selection of books that will enhance their self-concepts and contribute to developing their potential, not books that will impede their growth or insult their identities. The librarian's responsibility is to seek out and promote materials which are growth stimulators for all children. To quote Dr. Dorothy Broderick on this subject: ". . . If freedom means the right to warp children's minds or put our stamp of approval on bigotry, then I would do with a little less of it. . . . In the name of intellectual freedom, we defend materials that perpetuate attitudes that hinder the growth of individuals who are intellectually free. No racist is 'intellectually free.'"

CIBC CONCLUDES:
In conclusion, we would like to quote Donald High Smith, director of education development at Bernard M. Baruch College, City University of New York: "We who teach reading or any other subject must perceive the importance of developing in our students a burning desire to know their own personal and national truths. . . . Little does it matter, nor will it matter, that we live in the most literate nation in the world if those who can read continue to read of and believe in a nation where only white is right."

We appeal to the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the American Library Association: Let us have positive leadership in eliminating racism and sexism. It need not be done our way. But ***what is your way?***

An Action Program for ALA

During the last 200 years, the U.S. has failed to equalize the status of racial minorities and of women. For 100 of these years the American Library Association has professed belief in the principle of equality, yet has failed to address the racism and sexism within its own professional province, which perpetuate inequality. Therefore the CIBC urges **the ALA to actively commit its resources and prestige to a program combating racism and sexism in the library profession, focusing on the following:**

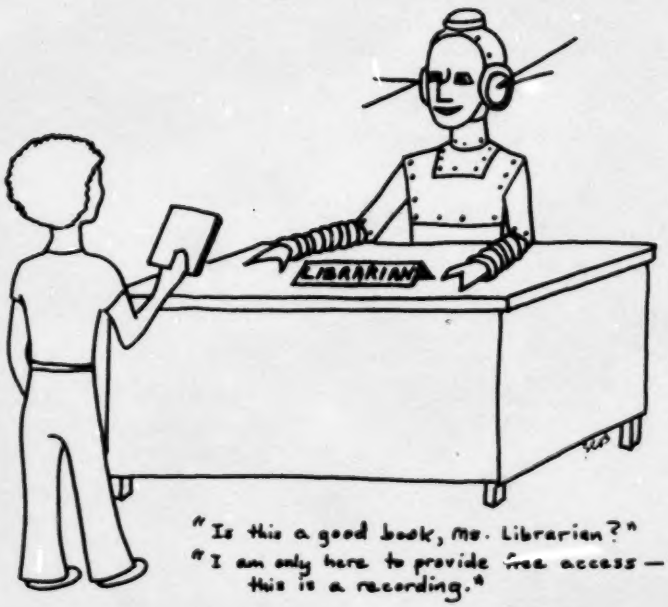
1. Pre-Service Training. That required courses be introduced in schools of library science to examine racism and sexism in children's literature and in the library profession.

2. In-Service Training. That the ALA undertake a broad program to assist states and localities in setting up racism and sexism awareness workshops and institutes; and that in all ALA periodicals, regular columns be devoted to this subject.

3. Intellectual Freedom. That the Intellectual Freedom Committee actively seek ways to reconcile its position on civil liberties with the urgent national need to develop equal rights for all. That as a step in this direction the IFC and the Children's Services Division issue a joint statement addressing the special problems posed by racism and sexism in children's books and the particular responsibilities which these entail for children's librarians.

4. Offensive Books as Learning Tools That the Children's Services Division innovate a program which provides children's librarians with guidelines on 1) how to use offensive books to develop children's understanding of racism and sexism, and 2) how to promote multicultural books.

5. Reform of Catalog Practices. That ALA adopt as a cataloging standard the full and fair treatment of women-related and multicultural materials—including drama, fiction and poetry. This standard would require the replacement of demeaning and inexact subject headings and assignment of enough subject tracings to properly represent such materials and make them accessible.



WHAT CAN ONE LIBRARIAN DO?

If you are a librarian and want to actively combat racism and sexism, here are some ways to begin:

- Check out your reading habits for pluralism. Are your viewpoints derived from reading only the major white media? Do you seek out alternative perspectives as expressed in Third World and feminist publications? (For suggestions, see the reading list that follows this article.)
- When did you last initiate involvement of feminists and Third World people from your community in library affairs?

The suggestions that follow are offered in the hope that they will be carried out after consulting Third World and feminist groups.

- Analyze why you have been buying and not buying certain books. Think of two choices you have made that provide non-sexist role models for girls. Think of two choices you have made that contribute to feelings of self-confidence and self-worth in Third World children. Can your own successes and mistakes in book selection help you to improve your criteria for determining future selections?
- Can you find at least one book on your library shelves, from any year, that you consider racist and one you consider sexist? Can you develop a discussion guide based on these books that will help teachers in your locality provide students with new insights on racism and sexism?
- Ask your local newspaper to publish a "stereotype-of-the-week" box to which children will submit a sexist or racist stereotype they have discovered in a book, film or TV show. (The accompanying caption—written

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"What we know now about children is that when image-building is impeded by racism and sexism, a damage has been permitted which is so deep and protracted that we are irresponsible if we condone it."
Donnarae MacCann, formerly children's librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library

---

by the child—should tell why the stereotype is demeaning.)

- Set up a periodic display for children, parents and teachers giving examples of racist and non-racist, sexist and non-sexist illustrations or passages from stories.
- Check out your catalog subject headings. Can you find headings that are derogatory to women or Third World peoples and that are likely to perpetuate stereotypes?
- Urge your local library association and the ALA to become more involved in the movement to eliminate institutional racism and sexism. A practical model is the program currently being conducted by the YWCA under the title ONE IMPERATIVE: ELIMINATE RACISM. A packet of materials giving directions on ways to counteract racism in YWCA branches is the "Action Audit for Change," available from the National Board, YWCA, Center for Racial Justice, 600 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.
- Suggest that your library school alma mater and/or the college in your area introduce courses on racist and sexist stereotypes in children's trade and textbooks.
- Write the CIBC about your actions and the successes or failures you have encountered so that these may be shared with other librarians.

For further information about consciousness-raising programs, racism and sexism awareness training facilities, and assistance in setting up conferences, workshops, or courses with anti-racist and anti-sexist topics, please write Dr. Robert Moore, CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center, Room 300, 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023. A free catalogue of anti-racist and anti-sexist materials is available on request.

Readings for Racism and Sexism Awareness

The following list of books, periodicals and publishing houses is not comprehensive, but it will furnish basic resources for consciousness raising.

Developing awareness of the functions of institutional and cultural racism

For Whites Only by Robert W. Terry, Eerdmans Publications (Grand Rapids, Mich.), 1970

Institutional Racism in America by Louis Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, Prentice-Hall, 1969 (paperback)

"The Rightness of Whiteness": The World of the White Child in a Segregated Society by Abraham F. Citron, Mich-Ohio Regional Educations Laboratory, 1969; distributed by P.A.C.T. (163 Madison, Detroit, Mich. 48226) or from the CIBC (1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023)

White Racism: Its History, Pathology and Practice by Barry N. Schwartz and Robert Disch, Dell, 1970

Developing awareness of sexism

And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education edited by Judith Stacy, Susan Bercaud and Joan Daniels, Dell, 1974 (paperback)

Women's Studies for Teachers and Administrators: A Packet of Inservice Education Materials by Merle Froschl, Florence Howe and Sharon Kaylem, The Feminist Press (Box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568)

"As long as it is Black people being offended we invoke intellectual freedom and tell Blacks that bigots have rights too."
Dorothy Broderick, Associate Professor, Dalhousie University School of Library Science

Developing insights about Third World and feminist perspectives

Africana Library Journal: A Quarterly Bibliography and Resource Guide, 101 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003

Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers by Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Hsu Wong, Howard University Press, 1974

Akwesasne Notes: Newspaper of the Mohawk Nation, Rooseveltown, N.Y. 13683

The Black Scholar, P.O. Box 908, Sausalito, Cal. 94965

Black Women in White America: A Documentary History edited by Gerda Lerner, Vintage Books, 1972

The Feminist Press, Box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568

El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican Thought, P.O. Box 9275, Berkeley, Cal. 94719

History of Puerto Rico by Loida Figueroa, Las Americas Publishing Co. (40-22 23rd St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101), 1975

Know Inc., P.O. Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221

Occupied America: The Chicanos Struggle Toward Liberation by Rudolfo Acuña, Harper & Row, 1972

The Rican Journal, 2409 Geneva Terrace, Chicago, Ill. 60614

Textbooks and the American Indian by Jeannette Henry, American Indian Society, 1970; order from *The Indian Historian* (1451 Masonic Avenue, San Francisco, Cal. 94117)

Viva La Raza! by Elizabeth S. Martinez and Enriqueta L. Vásquez, Doubleday, 1974

Women on Words and Images (WOWI), Box 2163, Princeton, N.J. 08540

Book selection aids

American Indian Authors for Young Readers: A Selected Bibliography by Mary Gloyne Byler, The Association on American Indian Affairs (432 Park Ave. So., New York, N.Y. 10016), 1973

The Black American in Books for Children by Donnarae MacCann and Gloria Woodward, Scarecrow Press, 1972

Dick and Jane as Victims by Women on Words and Images (Box 2163, Princeton, N.J. 08540), 1971

Feminist Packet by CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center (1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023)

Human and Anti-Human Values in Children's Books: Guidelines for the Future by the CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators (1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023), 1976

The Image of the Black in Children's Fiction by Dorothy Broderick, Bowker, 1973

Interracial Books for Children Bulletin, special issues: "Chicano Culture in Children's Literature: A Survey of 200 Books"; "100 Children's Books about Puerto Ricans: A Study in Racism, Sexism and Colonialism"; "Asian Americans in Children's Books: Analyses of 66 Books."

Sexism and Racism in Popular Basal Readers by CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center (1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023), 1976

Starting Out Right: Choosing Books About Black People for Young Children Pre-School through Third Grade by Bettye I. Latimer, 1972; distributed by Division for Administrative Services (Wisconsin Hall, 126 Langson St., Madison, Wis. 53702)

DON'T LOOK IN THE CATALOG!

By Sanford Berman

A study was conducted by the CIBC and the *Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin* to determine what—if any—changes have been made in library catalog headings as a result of librarians' "new awareness" (see "Catalogers in Revolt against LC's Racist, Sexist Headings," Vol. 6, Nos. 3 & 4).

Under review were the headings used in such categories as race, ethnic groups, women, older people, etc. Questionnaires were completed by 48 libraries throughout the country. What were the results? Well, they required no elaborate computer analysis. Overwhelmingly, the institutions surveyed

- Perpetuate and promote stereotypes and prejudices which are not only antithetical to true multiculturalism but also to those basic, humane values librarians so often profess.
- Unquestioningly (indeed, automatically) rely upon external "authorities," especially the Library of Congress subject heading scheme or its spin-off, the *Sears* list, rarely using their own judgement and creativity to change an objectionable descriptor, or to innovate forms for otherwise "buried" topics. "We follow Library of Congress," was a typical response.
- Have either failed to stock material on many key, contemporary subjects, or—even if they have—make them hard to find through the catalog.

Regarding stereotypes and biases:

- 21 of the 48 libraries use the unacceptable NATIVE RACES as either an ethnologic or political rubric; only 2 institutions report a preference for COLONIZATION, and none favor the far more accurate and unequivocal COLONIZED PEOPLES.
- In only 3 out of 43 catalogs do descriptors admit that the U.S. has ever maintained bona fide "colonies," rather than simply administering idyllic, non-imperial "territories and possessions" or "insular possessions."
- UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES thrives in 37 catalogs, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES in 1, and the completely neutral and unslanted THIRD WORLD *in none*.
- Two-thirds of the librarians still employ the thoroughly discredited NEGROES, which even LC has lately begun to replace with "Afro-American" and "Black" forms.
- "Eskimos" and "Bushmen"—alien and derogatory nicknames—are listed, with a *single* exception, instead of the authentic *self*-names, INUIT and SAN. Similarly, the demeaning, Boer-derived HOTTENTOTS uniformly appears in place of the indigenous KHOI-KHOIN (a lone institution tags such material AFRICA—NATIVE RACES— hardly an improvement).
- The negative, "outsider" term, UNTOUCHABLES, surfaces nine times more often than the Ghandian, nonjudgmental HARIJANS.
- "Primitive" constructions have nowhere been replaced by "folk" or "traditional" forms which would better accord with modern anthropology and would reflect no Western, "civilized" preconceptions.
- Roughly five out of six libraries regularly—and mindlessly—slap "labels" like RACE PROBLEMS and RACE QUESTION on works dealing with interracial themes, overlooking the fact that interracial contact can be of an accommodating or amiable nature and that "Question" forms wrongly attribute "guilt" to the *victims* of discrimination themselves. Reputable scholars and organizations (like Michael Banton and the United Nations) unmistakably endorse the purely descriptive, unwarped phrase, RACE RELATIONS.
- Despite repeated protests by ALA's Jewish Caucus and others, 31 out of 40 respondents continue to use JEWISH QUESTION as a primary heading, 2 employ JEWS—POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS, 5 merely assign the overly-broad JEWS, and a grandly disappointing total of 2 apply the suitably fair and specific JEWS—RELATIONS WITH GENTILES.
- The "over-60's" are not SENIORS or even ELDERLY, but rather AGED, which is emphatically *not* how they think of nor call themselves. In seven libraries, they aren't quite *people* at all, relevant material being variously subject-traced under the "conditions" of AGING or OLD AGE.
- Sexist, male-oriented forms clearly predominate: for instance, none of the libraries employ AMITY instead of BROTHERHOOD or BROTHERLINESS, though 2 use the over-extended form, FRIENDSHIP, and another 2 the somewhat narrow RACIAL UNDERSTANDING. FIREMEN has yet to be supplanted by the gender-free FIRE FIGHTERS; a negligible 2 respondents (of 21) had substituted GUARDS or POLICE, PRIVATE for WATCHMEN; and PILGRIM

"EXCUSE ME, MISS, I'M SEARCHING FOR AN HONEST BOOK."

FATHERS—at once ageist, sexist and unhistoric—perseveres in 44 out of 48 catalogs.

Regarding inadequate collection-development/catalog access:

• Two libraries claim to use AGE DISCRIMINATION; two others say they catalog pertinent material under either DISCRIMINATION or AGED—LAWS, STATUTES, ETC. (neither of which is nearly equivalent), and *none* employs the increasingly common and serviceable AGEISM.

• Out of 47 libraries, only 8 provide *direct* access to material on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment; the remainder either don't have anything on the subject or in effect "hide" it under WOMEN—LEGAL STATUS, LAWS, ETC., U.S. CONSTITUTION and similar catch-alls.

• None of the libraries has established a heading for the Afro-American holiday, KWANZA (though one mentioned an article in *Ebony, Jr.*).

• *One* library uses NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, while only three have introduced both RACISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE and SEXISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, or the nearly synonymous RACE DISCRIMINATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE and SEX DISCRIMINATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE. (Some institutions doubtless *have* at least a few works on racism and sexism in juvenile media, but probably "dump" them into a sprawling, unmanageable category like CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.)

From a humanistic or multicultural standpoint, our analysis is deeply disturbing. But it need not be paralyzing. An aroused public—and profession—can transform the catalog from a thing of embarrassment and frustration into the unbiased and effective tool it ought to be.

Editor's note: Librarians are urged to report their own subject (and other) cataloging changes to the author, c/o Hennepin County Library, 7001 York Ave. S., Edina, Minn. 55435. Subscription rates for the bi-monthly *Cataloging Bulletin*: $4/individuals, $7/institutions. Write the Secretary, Technical Services Division, Hennepin County Library, at the above address. The complete results of the survey, including alternative subject heads, are also available from the Library.

Background Documents in "Censorship" Controversy

Reprinted below are four documents relevant to the censorship controversy discussed in the article beginning on page 3. First is the "Statement on Reevaluation of Library Materials for Children's Collections," adopted by the Board of Directors of the ALA Children's Services Division, on January 23, 1973. The second is the feature article that appeared in the *Bulletin*, Vol. 6, Nos. 3 & 4, which was distributed at the 1975 ALA convention. The third document is the ALA reply issued by the IFC after its midwinter 1975 conference. Last is a brief rebuttal to the IFC statement that appeared on the editorial page of the *School Library Journal*, March, 1976.

STATEMENT ON REEVALUATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN'S COLLECTIONS

Librarians must espouse critical standards in selection and reevaluation of library materials. It is incumbent on the librarian working with children to be aware that the child lacks the breadth of experience of the adult and that librarians have a two-fold obligation in service to the child:

1. To build and maintain collections of materials which provide information on the entire spectrum of human knowledge, experience and opinion.
2. To introduce to the child those titles which will enable him to develop with a free spirit, an inquiring mind, and an ever-widening knowledge of the world in which he lives.

Because most materials reflect the social climate of the era in which they are produced, it is often difficult to evaluate some aspects of a work at the time of purchase. But social climate and man's state of knowledge are constantly changing and librarians should therefore continuously reevaluate their old materials in the light of growing knowledge and broadening perspectives. In the process of reevaluation it may be found that an old title is still fresh and pertinent, or even, that it was produced ahead of its time and now has a new relevance. It may, on the other hand, no longer serve a useful role in the collection. It may have been superseded by better books.

In making his decision, the librarian has a professional obligation to set aside personal likes and dislikes, to avoid labeling materials, to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each title, and to consider the material as a whole with objectivity and respect for all opinions. Only after such consideration can he reach a decision as to whether the title is superseded in coverage and quality, and should be discarded, or should be kept in the collection.

The Board of Directors of the Children's Services Division, American Library Association, supports the Library Bill of Rights and Free Access to Libraries for Minors. Reevaluation is a positive approach to sound collection building and should not be equated with censorship.

CENSORSHIP AND RACISM: A DILEMMA FOR LIBRARIANS

Most of us equate the act of censorship with a clear and deliberate process, set in motion for clearly defined objectives. A censor acts to eliminate or label materials that are felt to offend prevailing public attitudes. The censor finds fault; he/she supervises the manners and views of others. Generally, we associate censorship with matters of sex—occasionally, of politics. When movies are given an "X" rating, they have been censored from consumption by part of the public. Government documents marked "classified" or "top secret" are censored, and recently the government demanded that certain passages in a book about the CIA be censored "in the interest of national security." To most of us, then, censorship is a very specific activity, openly engaged in, and some Americans hold it to be acceptable and appropriate under particular circumstances. Most librarians, on the other hand, claim to disapprove of all forms of censorship. But what they mean, as we shall see, is all *overt* censorship.

Censorship also has a covert aspect. When a book, for example, presents one set of facts or one viewpoint about a given

subject and excludes other facts or viewpoints—and when the inclusion of some facts and the omission of others results in a picture of reality that is different from the one that would have emerged had all the facts been presented—then covert censorship has taken place. Only part of the truth has been presented; other parts of the truth have been censored.

Another example of covert censorship is revealed if we multiply the previous case 1000 times—that is, if not one book but 1000 books on the same subject present one set of facts/viewpoint and omit other facts/viewpoints. In this case, censorship becomes pervasive, resulting in the perpetuation of distorted pictures of reality. It is so effective that the distortions come to be accepted as the only reality—as the whole truth.

In the instance of overt censorship, it is known to exist and approved by many. But where covert censorship is concerned, most people are unaware that it exists. They are unaware that certain facts and/or viewpoints have been withheld from their consideration, unaware that the "reality" they accept is perhaps not reality at all but an imposed distortion of reality. We are concerned here with the ways in which covert censorship serves as a perpetuator of racism and sexism in literature.

According to the United States Civil Rights Commission, "racism may be viewed as any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of color." We can define sexism as any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of sex.

Although many (but by no means all) of the cruder forms of racism and sexism that afflicted our society for centuries have passed into history, racism and sexism nevertheless endure, supported by an economic and political system that is fundamentally exploitative. Racism leads to statistics which show that non-whites have poorer education, poorer income, poorer health and life expectancy than do whites. Sexism leads to the statistics showing that women have less earning power and fewer role possibilities than do men.

The publishing industry, like all industries and institutions in our society, has always been overwhelmingly white—in ownership, management and profits. Hence, for as long as book publishing has been a major industry in this country, white male publishers have always had final decision-making power about printing materials (written mainly by whites) on the basis of what they have believed about themselves, believed about the American system and American values, and what they have chosen (or needed) to believe about others. (This is not to infer that white males can never join the struggle against racism and sexism—merely that few have done so. Nor is it to infer that all minorities and all women automatically struggle against racism or sexism—merely that more are likely to do so.)

When a publishing firm continually selects for publication, without meaningful counsel or input from minority group members, manuscripts that include certain facts and viewpoints and exclude others, and when the selections and rejections are determined by the publisher's own unconscious racist and sexist attitudes, then racism, sexism and censorship can be said to have joined hands. Through covert censorship, racist and sexist stereotypes and attitudes have passed from generation to generation. Consider, too, that *no* malicious intent need be involved. It is primarily a matter of orientation—a white male, middle/upper class, ethnocentric orientation.

Most of the books that fill our libraries came into print via the process described above. That process is further reinforced by the book selection policies of libraries—also conceived and implemented primarily by whites. Our libraries are, therefore, racist and sexist institutions. They contain volumes and volumes from which part of the truth has been omitted by covert censorship. It is with this situation in mind that we address the question: What can librarians and educators do about it?

In response to the demand by Third World citizens and other enlightened Americans that ways be found to deal with books which demean, derogate or otherwise abuse the truth about minority Americans' humanity, history and culture, a controversy ensued in which the American Library Association (ALA) asserted itself.

The ALA denounced as "censorship" any requests to remove *Little Black Sambo* and other publications from library shelves. On the positive side, ALA spokespeople advanced the "balancing" concept as the most effective and only *acceptable* (to them) way to counter racist or sexist content in literature. According to that concept, racist and sexist books should remain on the shelves, while non-racist and non-sexist books should also be available in substantial numbers to "balance the scales." Supportively, the 1948 Library Bill of Rights prohibits exclusion of materials from circulation "because of the race or nationality or the social, political, or religious views of the authors" and calls for the provision of "books and other materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times." Both are honorable principles.

In theory, certainly, "balancing" has merit. However, as long as the publishing industry is constituted as it is, anti-racist and anti-sexist books will see the light of day in extremely small numbers—meaning that such books will merely trickle, not flow, into our libraries. In addition, the power that determines what books are reviewed in major media and by whom, what books are placed on recommended lists and what books are publicized resides in the same hands that control publishing. And since all of the aforementioned factors determine what books circulate most widely in libraries, the hypothetical presence on library shelves of equal numbers of alternative books still would not constitute a "balance."

There is a third point to consider in regard to the balancing concept. As a Black librarian commented recently at a librarians' seminar, the way to create a "balance" where an anti-Black book is present is not with a pro-Black book but with an anti-white book. Her well-taken remark clearly exposes the flaw in this theory!

ALA Contradictions

In the course of this controversy, attention has been called by ALA spokespeople to that clause in the Library Bill of Rights which proscribes the restriction or removal of books from library shelves "because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Other ALA documents describe racism as an "idea" which "many find abhorrent, repugnant and inhumane," and underscore "the professional responsibility of librarians to guard against encroachments upon intellectual freedom."

But a number of contradictions and otherwise questionable content is to be found in these documents. For example, the Library Bill of Rights notwithstanding, an ALA Children's Services Division statement (adopted in 1973) affirms the right (in fact, the obligation) of the children's librarian to "discard" older books found to be superseded "in coverage and quality" by more recently published ones. And despite the comment in another document entitled *Sexism, Racism and Other -Isms in Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* that the Bill of Rights "makes no distinction between materials and services for children and adults," the Children's Services resolution defines for the children's librarian the following "two-fold obligation in service to the child:"

1. To build and maintain collections of materials which provide information on the entire spectrum of human knowledge, experience and opinion.
2. To introduce to the child those

> titles which will enable him to develop with a free spirit, an inquiring mind, and an ever-widening knowledge of the world in which he lives.

No equivalent "definition of obligation" exists regarding adults.

Note: The "reevaluation" concept set forth in the Children's Services statement and the obligation assigned to children's librarians are obviously compatible and, furthermore, sensible. They begin to point a way toward handling racist and sexist materials. It is, therefore, with deep regret that we learn of the recent move by the Committee on Intellectual Freedom of the ALA's Children's Services Division to rescind even this small step in the right direction. The committee has requested the CSD board to retract the 1973 reevaluation statement on the grounds that it "makes for confusion" with the spirit of the Library Bill of Rights.

America Misunderstood

We also observe that a disturbing theme runs through all of these ALA documents, divorcing social responsibility from professional responsibility. Librarians are, on the one hand, commended for being socially conscious and opposed to injustice but, at the same time, cautioned not to *act* on their beliefs lest they violate their professional commitment to support "intellectual freedom." We discern in this posture a pattern of reasoning that we believe is circular, with the starting point and finish line being the status quo. "Yes," the resolutions seem to say, "some things are repugnant and offensive, but all attitudes and ideas are equal under God. In the name of professionalism and the equality of ideas, *do nothing*." What is missed is the fact that when people are unequal in a given society due to the oppressive nature of that society's institutions, then those people's ideas are unequal and proliferate unequally in books, in schools, in libraries.

But the most unfortunate aspect of the ALA position as expressed in the resolutions cited is their basic premise, grounded in a set of commonly held myths about the nature of American society. America, the ALA seems to assume, is a wholesome, democratic, enlightened nation in which "intellectual freedom" reigns. No wonder, given such an assumption, that racism and sexism can be dismissed merely as "ideas"—among many ideas that coexist happily in this democracy.

Nowhere in this at best naive, and at worst dishonest, conception of the United States is there room for recognizing that such myths—attractive as they are—fall before the reality of life for the poor, the non-white, the powerless among America's citizens.

Nowhere is there room for recognizing that libraries are predominantly white male ethnocentric institutions which, due to covert censorship, have always been unbalanced in their representation of the points of view of non-white Americans and of women. (Indeed, the American public library cannot but reflect the true nature of the American system—and that system is a tyranny of race, sex and class.)

Towards a Solution

For all of the foregoing reasons, we feel compelled to conclude that the so-called anti-censorship position of the ALA, supported by the "Freedom to Read" movement, is in actuality, though perhaps unwittingly, pro-racist, pro-sexist and pro-censorship. Failing to acknowledge the character of American society, their position precludes the possibility of change.

Appreciating the opposition of civil libertarians to overt censorship (and realizing that such censorship has usually been imposed for undemocratic purposes), we are not inclined to advocate overt censorship as the way to deal with racism and sexism in books. Nor, on the other hand, are we able to support the ALA position about which we have such serious questions. Adhering to the ALA resolution format, we suggest the following approach:

Whereas if the U.S. were actually a democratic society with freedom and justice for all, and

Whereas if the publishing industry were racially, sexually and economically representative

Then the ALA resolutions would make perfect sense and should be supported by all.

B U T . . .

Whereas our existing society oppresses members of racial minority groups, women and poor people of all races and sexes, and

Whereas racism, sexism and classism are destructive to human lives and human potential, and

Whereas our society does not actually permit the free and equal circulation of all ideas and viewpoints, and

Whereas it is the professional and social responsibility of librarians and of educators to broaden the horizons and enrich the lives of all people,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT we, as librarians and educators, believing in the equal value of all human beings and in the equal value and integrity of all human histories and cultures, will . . .

We ask individual librarians as well as ALA committees to complete the above resolution and send it to this *Bulletin*—with their comments—so we can develop an ongoing dialogue on strategies for change.

STATEMENT OF ALA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE

[Statement adopted by ALA Jan., 1976]

In a special issue of the *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* (Vol. 6, Nos. 3-4) distributed at the ALA's 1975 Annual Conference in San Francisco, the editors of the *Bulletin* charged that the ALA's policies on intellectual freedom are "in actuality, though perhaps unwittingly, pro-racist and pro-censorship."

The editors' charge was based upon their contention that the ALA has been insensitive to "covert censorship." This covert censorship, the editors contended, has resulted in libraries with an "unbalanced" presentation of the points of view of non-white Americans and women. The process of covert censorship was described in these terms:

> The publishing industry, like all industries and institutions in our society, has always been overwhelmingly white—in ownership, management and profits. Hence, for as long as book publishing has been a major industry in this country, white male publishers have always had final decision-making power about printing materials. . . .
>
> When a publishing firm continually selects for publication . . . manuscripts that include certain facts and viewpoints and exclude others, and when the selection and rejections are determined by the publishers' own unconscious racist and sexist attitudes, then racism, sexism and censorship can be said to have joined hands.

The editors of the *Bulletin* went on to say:

> [W]e are not inclined to advocate overt censorship as a way to deal with racism and sexism in books.

On this point, at least, the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association and the editors of the *Bulletin* are in agreement. But there our agreement ends.

The efforts of the members of the American Library Association have contributed significantly to the creation of library collections free of censorship. The refusal of the Association to endorse the censorship of racist and sexist books no more makes it pro-racist and pro-sexist than its refusal to censor the works of Karl Marx makes it pro-communist.

In addition to opposing the censorship of works containing unpopular viewpoints, the American Library Association and the Intellectual Freedom Committee have encouraged the dissemination of minority views, having recognized the special difficulties these views may face in gaining a hearing. Indeed, it is one of the assumptions of the *Library Bill of Rights* that democracies require the expression of minority viewpoints, and that it is the special responsibility of libraries to make them accessible to the public.

In view of the purposes of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, we cannot under any circumstances join in a campaign to

"balance" library collections through censorship. Above all, we want to emphasize that we do not support any criteria for evaluating library collections—whether these criteria be established by government or by private groups—which supplant the ultimate standard of the value and usefulness of library materials to library patrons.

We find little to fault, and much to praise, in efforts to encourage the publication of works presenting women and minorities in non-sexist and non-racist roles. But we do not support any efforts to suppress works that do not meet the non-sexist and non-racist criteria established by various groups, including the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

Librarians are ultimately responsible to their patrons. When a librarian responds to a request from a patron, no third party should be allowed to intervene in their confidential transaction.

CIBC's Preliminary Rebuttal

The protection of unpopular viewpoints is a worthy and necessary goal in any society. And although the McCarthy era is behind us, there are many worthwhile battles to be waged today by Americans who value freedom of expression. But for the IFC to classify racism and sexism as mere "unpopular viewpoints" is an outrageous distortion of reality.

Racism and sexism are far from being unpopular or controversial issues. They are policies, practices, and beliefs by which our society's established institutions now function. Notwithstanding establishment rhetoric to the contrary, statistics confirm the pervasiveness of racism and sexism in American culture. For the IFC to equate communist viewpoints—which are clearly unpopular and threatening to the establishment—with racist and sexist viewpoints—which are in practice the accepted establishment norm—is completely untenable.

A librarian's failure to take a stand against racist and sexist practices is, in effect, to give consent to those practices. Silence is consent—on the part of a librarian, or any other citizen. Moreover, for the IFC to invoke some mythical sanctity in the "confidential" relationship between librarian and patron represents a final retreat which borders on the ridiculous when that patron is a child.

How can a book which assaults the humanity of a particular group of people and maims the self-images of children who belong to that group be of value and usefulness to any child? The librarian who questions the continued use of *Little Black Sambo* is exercising the best professional and humane judgement. The librarian who evaluates the content, as well as the literary character of materials when ordering new books can help young patrons become bias-free citizens.